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ABSTRACT

This Monthly Action Kit introduces some approaches to defining local substance abuse indicators and provides ideas on how to measure them. The kit also contains examples of what some communities are doing to measure their local progress. A few indicators worth considering are outlined with suggestions about what to measure, where to find the data, and how to interpret it. The featured indicators are: (1) alcohol outlets; (2) people in treatment; and (3) substance use arrests. The kit also offers a sampling of resources and websites to contact for additional information. The key findings from a survey on promising strategies to combat substance abuse are highlighted. (SLD)

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1999 Monthly Action Kit

ED 428 157

Beyond Anecdote:

Using Local Indicators to Guide Your Community Strategy to Reduce Substance Abuse

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Special 1999 Issue

BEYOND ANECDOTE:
USING LOCAL INDICATORS TO GUIDE YOUR COMMUNITY STRATEGY TO REDUCE SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Every two years, Join Together conducts a national survey to describe and quantify the community movement against substance abuse. We release our findings in a report that is disseminated to over 40,000 local, state and federal leaders. Our fourth national survey, called *Promising Strategies*, details characteristics of effective coalitions, community perspectives and the policy opinions of local leaders. By comparing our findings to that of previous years, we begin to see important patterns and trends in the field. This analysis enables us to decide where to focus our strategies and attention, and to understand how we can be most effective.

Many local groups who responded to our survey told us they, too, are using local indicators of substance abuse to determine their own effectiveness and to chart future activities.

We asked survey respondents: how do you know you are making a difference? While some groups told us that they rely on subjective measures such as community feedback, others understand the importance of going beyond anecdotes to gather concrete facts such as surveys and monitoring studies. As our findings reveal, it does not take a huge budget or a large staff for a group to be able to show the impact it is making. (See box.)

Today, using accurate and relevant local outcome data is more important than ever before since funders and policymakers are increasingly asking community groups for concrete evidence of their success. They want to see measurable change. Therefore, groups need to be able to answer questions such as: What are the most important substance abuse problems you are trying to address? What data and experience confirms the fact that these are where you should focus your attention? How will you know if your focus remains correct and the efforts are achieving the expected results?

Any Group Can Measure Its Impact . . . .

Groups do not need a large budget or big staff to be able to objectively track the impact they have on their communities.

Our survey found that the groups most likely to measure their impact share the following characteristics:

- **A small staff (less than three full-time employees)**
- **A handful of volunteers (1 -10)**
- **Moderate budgets (groups with the largest budgets were no more likely to measure their impact than small or mid-sized ones.)**

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Sharing Information

"In New Jersey, since each county is responsible for gathering much of the statistical data from reports to the state, they work together and break the information down for each community. That is a good use of professional time and simplifies the work that would have to be done by each individual alliance - one person contacting each agency rather than many doing the same job."

Hank Pomerantz
School Psychologist
Program Coordinator
Municipal Alliance -
Parsippany-Troy Hills Township
Parsippany, NJ

Local indicator data can help groups develop an effective strategy. This information is often already collected by other groups and used for monitoring purposes. For instance, emergency room admissions related to substance abuse and the number of people admitted into treatment are just a few examples of the type of local indicators that should be available.

These statistics, and many others, can help you compare current conditions to those of the past and describe and monitor change.

This Monthly Action Kit introduces you to some important local substance abuse indicators and provides you with ideas on how to measure them. It also presents examples of what others are doing to measure their local progress. These stories may inspire your own work. Finally, it offers a sampling of resources and websites that are worthwhile to contact for more information about this topic. We hope that these tools are helpful.

For more information about community indicators or to request a copy of Join Together's *Promising Strategies*, or *How Do You Know We Are Making a Difference*, call (617) 437-1500, visit Join Together Online at www.jointogether.org or send an email to info@jointogether.org ■

Tell Us What Indicators You Use in Your Community!

We'd like to know what indicators you track over time, and how you obtain the data you use. Please fill out the faxback form enclosed and return it to Join Together. Or, visit the Resource Finder on Join Together Online at www.jointogether.org and send us your answers electronically.

GETTING STARTED

Developing an effective strategy to reduce substance abuse problems in your community may begin with gaining an understanding of your environment, along with the specific problems you want to address. Indicators can be valuable tools to help you in this quest. But how do you actually get started? First, each community needs to consider its own goals and its own resources to develop a plan. But here are some basic steps that we recommend:

Convene a working group. It is important to convene a diverse group, which can be large or small. In most communities, representatives from law enforcement, human service, hospitals/health care providers, treatment and the local schools, colleges and universities are particularly crucial in this process since they may have access to important data. It is also helpful to select people who hold leadership positions in their organizations, who may already have the information you need. Begin the group with a discussion about why this process of collecting local indicators is so important and how the collected data will be used. Define who your target audience will be once the information is gathered. This will help people to think broadly and understand this is not a research exercise but part of a plan that has a very practical purpose. Finally, make sure members of this group know they will plan the process, collect the data and report the results. This takes a real commitment from everyone involved.

Brainstorm an initial list of indicators. Once your initial working group is selected, select an appropriate facilitator. As a group, generate a list of possible indicators. The expertise around the table will most likely be able to identify the scope of local substance abuse problems and related measures. The facilitator can help guide the process by asking probing questions such as: What are the most important substance abuse problems in this community? How do we know? Use dialogue to help funnel broad ideas and responses (*ie:* The newspaper has been reporting on a crack problem in the schools) to more measurable expressions (youth drug use surveys, etc.) and determine where to begin finding this data.

Round out the indicator list. Now that you have your initial list, it is time to identify any gaps and determine what is missing. Start by categorizing the indicators. Classification may be sectoral (health, law enforcement, schools, etc.) or wide-ranging (availability/environment, prevention/treatment, use, enforcement/regulation and harm). By sorting the indicators in this way, you will be able to see the broad scope of community problems.

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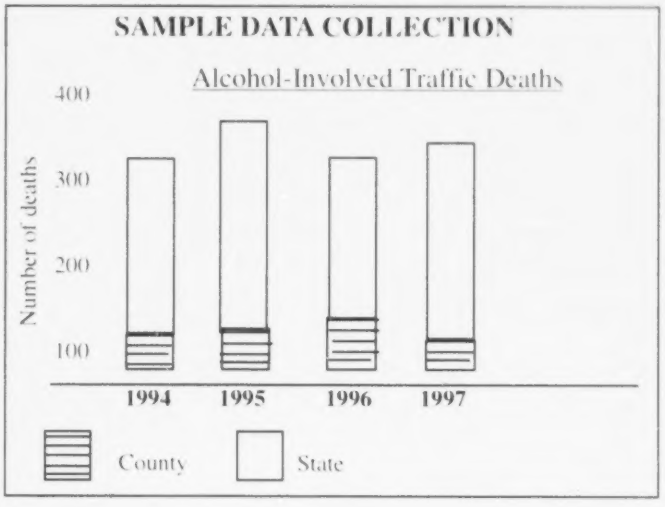

Find available data, and identify data that is not already available. Divide up your working group into three or four small teams and allocate the data collection work to be done. The data collection process does not require research skills or training in statistics. Rather, it requires clarity, persistence and hard work. Typically, each person may have to make a number of phone calls to track down the right information. This can be time-consuming but is worth the effort. It may be a good idea to document your inquiries in a log book for future reference. If data is not already being collected, you may want to ask local officials to begin to collect it. You should be prepared to explain why the data is important and how you will plan to use it *(i.e.* why it is in the best interest of the community to make this data available).

This information comes from "How Do We Know We Are Making a Difference? A Community Substance Abuse Indicators Handbook" prepared by Join Together and the Institute for Health Policy, Heller School, Brandeis University. View this publication electronically on Join Together Online at www.jointogether.org in the resource section. You can also order a free copy online, or call (617) 437-1500.

Develop a "short list" of indicators. Once the available data is gathered, reconvene your working group to review the information, debrief on the process of obtaining it, and decide which indicators to include in your final set. Screen each indicator according to criteria such as its validity (how well it measures the indicator of interest), reliability (how consistently the indicator is measured over time), relevance (how important the information on this aspect is) and availability (whether the information is available yearly and in the geographic format you desire, ie. neighborhood, city or countywide). If the indicator data is not collected in a format that you want, use this information to set more uniform standards in the future.

Finalize the set of indicators. Your short list of indicators may not be your final set. Looking at your results will help you to clarify some of the criteria you looked at earlier (validity, reliability, relevance and availability) and may help you further hone down your list.

Develop a reporting format. Communicate your findings in a simple and direct manner. Use charts and graphs to illustrate points and keep your findings brief. Seek help from others in presenting data in a user-friendly way. Businesses may be willing to lend their graphic software for the visual presentation or help you with other inexpensive display mechanisms.

Make strategic use of your report. Compiling indicator data is an important step in documenting the scope of alcohol, drug and tobacco problems within your community. The next critical step is to map out a strategy for change. Use the data to bring together community leaders to fine tune your strategy and address the problems your findings revealed. It is important that all members of your group are clear about the message your findings convey before making them public. Then it is time to share them with the community, the media, business and legislative leaders and others in influential positions to help respond to local problems. ■

Indicators of Community Substance Abuse Problems

Every community needs to decide what data is most important to gather, analyze and track over time. To accurately describe the substance abuse situation in your city or town, you should make sure the data describes the prevalence and nature of substance abuse problems, along with efforts being made in prevention, treatment, law enforcement and economic development. You should also include local demographic information that provides a broad picture of the entire community.

To help you begin to develop your own list of indicators, the following is a menu of a handful of indicators worth considering, along with information on what to measure, where to find the data, and how to interpret it. Remember this is only a sampling!

Indicator: Alcohol outlets

What to measure: The number of sites with licenses; new licenses issued; the number of licenses revoked during the year. The number of licenses per square mile measures the density of outlets selling alcohol in the community. Compare this information with crime incidents to see if there is a high rate of crime near liquor stores.

Where to find local data: State liquor commissions or Alcohol Beverage Control Commissions may provide a list of active licenses within each town. The Distilled Spirits Council of the United States publishes a summary of state laws and regulations. Call them at (202) 628-3544 for more information. Also check with police for local crime statistics.

How to interpret: It is important to measure the number of alcohol outlets in the community but difficult to interpret trends from the data. This is because one large store may sell more alcohol than several small stores combined. In addition, underage access to alcohol can not be measured with this indicator, since stores are counted equally, regardless of whether they have lenient practices selling to youth.

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Types of Indicator Data:

- The number of people who use and abuse substances, or who have access to substances;
- The level of community harm associated with substance abuse problems;
- The level of community involvement to prevent, treat and reduce the harm from substance abuse.

Indicator: People in Treatment

What to measure: Count the number of people in public and/or private treatment in specific alcohol and drug abuse programs. These programs are typically located in hospitals, residential units, halfway houses, mental health centers and outpatient clinics. The number of people treated is usually expressed per 100,000 population. Some state data systems may report the number of people on a particular day or the average daily census of clients. Other state systems may count the total number of admissions to specialty treatment in the entire year. The number of admissions is different from the number of people because many clients are admitted more than one time during the year, or they may be transferred between programs.

Where to find local data: Communities can rely on data gathered by the federal government and state agencies. Community groups can also supplement this information if it is incomplete. Nearly all states maintain client information for publicly-funded programs. Contact state and local authorities for this data. The data may not be broken out locally. In this case, you might contact local treatment facilities in your city or town and ask for their admission records. Look through the yellow pages and check with your local United Way office for a listing of community specialty treatment programs. Also, see if your state has a unit that licenses treatment facilities. If so, ask for a list of programs in your area.

Fighting Back Projects Meet Challenges in Collecting Data

Gathering community indicators is a real challenge for some of the Fighting Back projects, which are community-based programs fighting substance abuse located in large and mid-sized cities across the country.

These programs have had to serve as brokers to bring different school districts together to develop common ways of collecting and reporting information. They have also had to negotiate between public and private local hospitals in order to access needed data. In addition, they have educated public officials and decision makers about the importance of providing and using local statistics to change policies.

Such efforts are really paying off. The data collected is allowing the projects to get beneath the surface of their local substance abuse problems and determine where their resources are best spent.

For more information about Fighting Back, contact Join Together at (617) 437-1500, send an email to info@fightingback.org or visit www.jointogether.org/about/fb

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Indicator: Substance Use Arrests

What to measure: People arrested specifically *for* drug or alcohol use. This can include driving under the influence, other alcohol offenses, illicit drug trafficking or possession.

Where to find local data: Contact the FBI for consistently tabulated data. Also, gather data from all local law enforcement agencies. This includes your local police, precinct constables, alcoholic beverage control commissions, Federal Drug Enforcement agents and the FBI.

How to interpret: Interpreting arrest data can be tricky, since increased attention to a problem (*i.e.* holding a sting to see if stores are selling alcohol to minors) could result in an increase in the number of arrests. This does not, however, indicate an increase in the problem. This is an important distinction to keep in mind as you go about translating your data to determine trends. In addition, when you track arrest data over time, you will probably be unable to differentiate between increases in law enforcement efforts or decreases in the problem. Therefore, involve police departments in interpreting the numbers in the most accurate way. Also remember that the number of arrests for drunk driving is only a percentage of the overall number of drunk drivers that exist, since not all are arrested. ■

Sample Data Collection

Student Alcohol Use in Past Month

Search for Statistics Starts Online

Calls for statistics to back up funding requests have become increasingly familiar to substance abuse and gun violence prevention groups.

The Internet is a great place to start your search for objective information to convince policymakers that your services are necessary and cost-effective. One very useful resource is the Fedstats site.

Billed as offering "One-Stop Shopping for Federal Statistics," the Fedstats database at www.fedstats.gov provides information from 70 federal agencies that generate statistical data. Fedstats arranges information in a number of easy-to-search ways, including a topic listing that includes data on HIV/AIDS, children, crime, employment, foster care, health care, law enforcement, poverty, safety, highway deaths and tobacco use.

Especially valuable to community-based programs are Fedstats' links to state, county and local statistics, covering such issues as demographics, crime, education and health. You can also send specific questions/requests to-staff.

Also, the Briefing Room section of the White House web site at www.whitehouse.gov has pages on economic and social statistics related to breaking news and hot topics.

This article comes from Join Together Online at www.jointogether.org

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Reach out to your local Chamber of Commerce, Mayor's Office, Tourism Bureau, Convention Center, Realty Board and other groups concerned about the community's quality of life, such as the United Way, and the health and planning department. Devise a work plan to measure such things as substance abuse, crime, safety, education and health. Track the data over time to identify important trends. These factors could help draw new businesses, families, tourists and others into your area and can ultimately benefit the entire community.

- Find out if a working group to track indicators already exists in your community. If so, offer your help. You might help recruit more volunteers, access data that is difficult to get, solicit an increased commitment from city leaders and other local public offices, think strategically to create new alliances and disseminate the groups' findings to a broader audience. If no such group exists, you can help to start one. Talk to other programs in your community to get widespread support for your efforts. See if your mayor, police chief, public health commissioner or other key local leaders will head up the group. Be sure to attract volunteers representing all sectors of your community.

- Indicators alone aren't enough. What else is important? This information becomes truly valuable only when you follow it over time and see how your strategy and tactics affect the community's local trends. It also helps to set long-term goals and plans.

- Prepare a report of your findings and disseminate it broadly. Use the information to educate others about the nature of local substance abuse and other problems. Ask other groups to help you share the results, and get local media to publicize the highlights. Make sure to recognize volunteers, organizations or public officials who have demonstrated outstanding efforts on substance abuse problems. You may want to issue an annual report card to inform the community and recruit volunteers and support.

- Continue to promote your findings broadly over time. Repackage some of the information periodically in order to keep this issue a high priority on people's minds. Prepare regular information packets for the media and elected officials that focus on a select indicator. Include information, such as resources, related statistics and local stories to remind them of the pressing need for effective local or state policies. Always remain on the lookout for news events and other timely opportunities to share your findings. ■

Advice From A Funder

A lot of groups worry about tracking indicators because they fear that the results will suggest that they aren't doing a good job, according to Don Bucholtz, senior research director of the United Way of Massachusetts Bay. "People need to be reassured. We tell them it is an evaluation process, it is not to spotlight ineffectiveness but to have good information to be more effective," he explains.

WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING

All across the country, groups are using local indicators to guide and inform their work. Some communities follow several indicators over time as a way to evaluate their efforts. Others participate in more widescale indicator projects that track dozens of common measures yearly to effectively describe their neighborhoods. Here are some examples:

Local Data Helps Make the Case For Treatment on Demand in San Francisco

San Francisco has used local data to expand its system of substance abuse treatment for people who want it. The Community Substance Abuse Services department used local data to educate the San Francisco Board of Supervisors about the scope of substance abuse problems, and the need for more treatment.

Local statistics – including figures that show it is less expensive to treat a substance abuse addiction than to pay for the consequences – helped to make the case for increasing existing treatment options. For more information, contact Charles Morimoto at (415) 255-3750 or send an email to charles_morimoto@dph.sf.ca.us.

Indicators Unite Jacksonville, Florida

A common interest in tracking and analyzing community indicators has led to an important collaboration among the city of Jacksonville, Florida, the local Chamber of Commerce, and the Jacksonville Community Council Industry (JCCI). The partnership first began between JCCI and the Chamber of Commerce more than 10 years ago, when the Chamber needed help gathering measures that would reflect the quality of life in the community. The goal was to attract new businesses and corporations into the area. The Chamber knew how to collect economic data but was unsure how to go about accessing health, public safety or education information. The staff asked JCCI to complete a widescale project to look at 72 measurable indicators annually and release a community report of the findings. Since then, the reports have not only given the Chamber of Commerce the information it needs, but has helped inform public and private decision makers in Jacksonville and guided local policy making. JCCI offers a Replication Kit, which contains a detailed how-to manual. For more information, call David Swain at (904) 396-3052, send an email to jcci2@leading.net or visit www.unf.edu/~clifford/jcci.

Montgomery County Relies on Youth Survey Results

"The most important data source for us is the Maryland Adolescent Survey, which is broken out at the county level. It is done every two years for grades 6, 8, 10 and 12. Other information comes from crime reports, school records, and two new databases -- one on underage alcohol violations (citations and parties) and one on substance abuse screening of juveniles. We also have a good crime analysis unit in the police department with GIS capacity."

Nancy Rea
Certified Prevention Specialist
Montgomery County
Department of Health and Human Services/Public Health Services/
Health Promotion and Substance Abuse Prevention

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Franklin County Uses Indicators to Track Local Problems

Local measures have formed the foundation for the Franklin County Prevention Institute's strategy "Promise of a New Day." This is a five-year plan to reduce substance abuse in Franklin County, Ohio, based on the findings of local indicators that were tracked previously. The plan calls for a comprehensive approach to tackle local substance abuse problems through coordinated efforts among all community sectors and create measurable change. For more information, call Bill Crimi at 614-224-8822, send an email to bill@fcpi.org or visit www.fcpi.org/ ■

Indicator Results Impact Portland, Oregon

How can you use local measures to make a positive impact on the community? The Regional Drug Initiative in Portland, Oregon, annually tracks 12 county and statewide indicators and releases a Drug Impact Index of the findings. The Index not only provides the results, but also gives related facts, lists resources to contact for more information, offers action steps and includes personal stories and vignettes. This helps inform residents, the media and policymakers about the state of substance abuse problems in the region and makes the case for more effective policies and programs. Contact Carol Stone at (503) 294-7074, send an email to carol@regionaldruginitiative.org or visit www.regionaldruginitiative.org.

Using Indicators To Tell Local Stories

There are many important stories just waiting to be told in communities and states. Drug Strategies (a national research institute that promotes effective approaches to drug problems) recognized this fact when it set out to create a series of in -depth city and state profiles of alcohol, drug and tobacco problems.

Drug Strategies began the project in 1994 and the states it looked at included Arizona, California, rural Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Ohio and South Carolina. Similar profiles are also now being conducted in Detroit, Michigan, Santa Barbara, California, and Washington, D.C. The profiles cover the prevelance of substance use and its impact on all sectors. The reports rely on data that had already been collected, but in many cases had not been presented to the public in a meaningful way. However, once the information was packaged together, it took on new weight. In every case, the media gave prime time coverage to the findings, helping to generate greater public support for effective policies.

Currently, Drug Strategies is developing a handbook to guide users through the process of conducting their own local profiles of substance abuse. Two versions should be available by mid-1999: one for cities and one for states. To request a copy, call Drug Strategies at (202) 289-9070, fax a note to (202) 414-6199 or visit www.drugstrategies.org

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ADVICE FOR COMMUNITIES

What do communities need to know when they look at local indicators of substance abuse problems? We asked this question of Prof. Ralph Hingson, the Chairman of the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Boston University School of Public Health and senior advisor to Join Together. Prof. Hingson recently helped Join Together design and conduct its latest survey, *Promising Strategies*. In the following interview, he shares his advice with communities.

Q: When undertaking an evaluation of local substance abuse problems, what factors should community groups consider?

A: Groups need to understand the three types of evaluation measures that exist. The first type is "Process Evaluation," which includes things like whether people in the community come together around a certain issue or problem (this can be in the form of a coalition or taskforce). You might also look at whether interventions conducted by groups are done properly, and whether these actions are reported on. The next category of measures include "Impact Evaluations" which refer primarily to whether an intervention changes attitudes or perceptions in the way it was expected to. The final category is "Outcome Evaluations," which examine whether an intervention was successful in actually changing behavior and reducing the related risks or harms.

Q: In addition to measuring local problems, should communities also measure its positive attributes?

A: Yes. Mapping community capacity and assets is an important part of providing a comprehensive local picture. For instance, does your community have after-school programs for high-risk youth, school-based substance abuse prevention programs, churches that participate in recovery activities, adequate treatment options for people who need it, neighborhood crime watches and safe and well-lit parks? These are just a few of the types of attributes that may exist in a community.

Q: Where can communities turn for help with the process?

A: There are many resources that exist within a community. (See the following pages for a more detailed description of resources and data sources that might be of interest to your community.) ■

RESOURCES

There are many resources that exist to help communities track local indicators. Here is a sampling of the different types that exist.

Using Local Indicators:

"How Do We Know We Are Making a Difference? A Community Substance Abuse Indicators Handbook" helps communities develop indicators to describe the scope and nature of local substance abuse problems. To view this online or to request a free copy, go to the Resource Section of Join Together Online at www.jointogether.org. Or, call Join Together at (617) 437-1500, fax a note to (617) 437-9394, or send an email to info@jointogether.org.

"Measuring Progress Toward Healthy and Sustainable Communities: The Community Indicators Handbook" helps communities develop new measures of their overall health and well-being. It presents how-to's and resources for tailoring an indicator project to community needs. Visit www.rprogress.org/, call 415-781-1191, send an email to info@rprogress.org, or write to Redefining Progress, One Kearny Street, 4th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94108.

The Community Toolbox is an online resource that provides a variety of tools for communities. This includes innovative practices, success stories, ways to avoid common pitfalls and links to other people and websites. Visit http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu

Accessing Federal Statistics:

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Website at www.huduser.org
This federal website, which is a good source for housing data, breaks down information by population and region.

The U.S. Census at www.census.gov
This site contains demographic information, including housing, income, population and other useful statistics which can be sorted by zip code, neighborhood and area.

The Federal Interagency Council on Statistical Policy Website at www.fedstats.gov
The Federal Interagency Council on Statistical Policy maintains this site to provide easy access to the full range of statistics produced by more than 70 federal agencies. There are also regional statistics and links to other websites.

National Institute on Drug Abuse at www.nida.nih.gov/
This site provides timely research findings, statistics and information on drug abuse and presents scientific information in an easy-to-understand format.

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For State and Local Data:

Other places to contact:

- ☒ Your state medical examiner's office
- ☒ Your local Department of Motor Vehicles registry
- ☒ Your state health department

The CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS). Developed by the CDC in collaboration with federal, state, and private-sector partners, this voluntary system includes a national survey and surveys conducted by state and local education agencies. The YRBSS provides vital information on risk behaviors among young people to more effectively target and improve health programs. Contact the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Mail Stop K–32, 4770 Buford Highway NE, Atlanta, GA 30341-3717; call (770) 488-3168; send an email to ccdinfo@cdc.gov; or visit www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/.

Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study. The landmark study illustrates the widespread problem of binge drinking among college students and its negative second-hand effects. Programs on individual college campuses are also being studied, along with the effects of changes in state, local, or college tobacco and alcohol control policies. Contact Henry Wechsler, PhD, Principal Investigator, at (617) 432-1137 or go to http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/facres/wchslr.html

The Core Survey. The Core Institute produces a survey to measure alcohol and drug use among students at 171 four-year colleges in the United States. Contact the public relations office at colleges in your community or state to find out if they participated, and if so, to get the local data. Or, contact the Core Institute at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901, call (618) 453-4366, send an email to mailtocoreinst@siu.edu or visit www.siu.edu/departments/coreinst/public_html/index.html

Treatment Outcomes and Performance Pilot Studies (TOPPS). These pilot studies are being conducted in 14 states in conjunction with the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment to address specific issues that improve state wide treatment program accountability. The states are Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Utah and Washington. For more information about the study, or for your local contact, go to www.samhsa.gov/CSAT/topps/default.htm

The Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS). This website contains data on all crashes in the United States that occur on a public roadway and where a fatality is involved in the crash. Go to: www.bts.gov/ntda/farsdb/

Geographical Information System Mapping. Some communities are tracking their local information with a new tool called Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Mapping. This special software program enables groups to plug in local data on a map to see patterns and trends that exist in various neighborhoods. For more information about GIS, visit www.hdm.com/gis3.htm

KEY FINDINGS FROM JOIN TOGETHER'S SURVEY

More than 4,000 such coalitions responded to our 4th national survey, providing information about their organizations, activities, and policy preferences. Six key findings emerged, based on the analysis of 1,608 lead coalition respondents:

❖ Finding 1: Community leaders want significant changes in long-standing public policies and a change in the priorities of the federal government regarding substance abuse.

❖Finding 2: Coalitions are an integral component of a community's response to substance abuse.

❖Finding 3: Results of the community report card: All community-based institutions can improve their response and increase their attention to substance abuse.

❖Finding 4: In places where the substance abuse situation is improving, the structures and characteristics of coalitions and the communities in which they operate are different.

❖Finding 5: Coalitions come in all shapes and sizes. There is no one "ideal" type of coalition.

❖Finding 6: Many coalitions are taking an active role to prevent gun violence in their communities.

COMING SOON:
Regional breakouts of the survey findings will be available on Join Together Online. Visit the Resource Finder at www.jointogether.org. The state findings that will be profiled first include those from:
Maryland
Michigan
California
Illinois
Ohio
Missouri
Florida
Texas
Washington
Utah
Other states will follow.

Groups With Written Strategic Plans Are More Likely To Report Making A Difference in Their Communities

Another important finding in both our previous national survey (Leading From the Ground Up, 1996) and this latest one is that *having a strategy makes a difference.* Coalitions that had a written strategic plan with measurable objectives were significantly more likely to report having a direct impact on reducing alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use in their communities. Conversely, coalitions without a written strategic plan are more than 50% more likely than coalitions with a plan to say they had no impact at all on any of these three areas.

For a free copy of Join Together's report, called Promising Strategies, *call (617) 437-1500, send an email to info@jointogether.org or visit Join Together Online at www.jointogether.org*

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FAXBACK: HOW DO YOU USE LOCAL INDICATORS IN YOUR WORK?

How does your community use local indicators to guide its strategy to reduce substance abuse? Join Together wants to know! Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions and fax this form back to: Lisa Falk at (617) 437-9394. You can also visit the Resource Finder on Join Together Online at www.jointogether.org to fill out this form electronically.

Name: _____ Title: _____ Organization: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

1.) Your community population is: ___ Fewer than 10,000 ___ 10,001 to 50,000 ___ 50,001 to 100,00 ___ 100,001 to 500,000 ___ More than 500,000

2.) What type of local indicators do you regularly track in your community? (please check all that apply)	3.) Where do you get this data? (please specify for each indicator)	4.) Which best describes each indicator over the past 2 yrs: (Please put a checkmark in the box that best applies)		
		Improved	Worsened	Stayed the Same
☐ Underage drinking and/or illicit drug use				
☐ Drug-related HIV/AIDS cases				
☐ Substance use arrests				
☐ Substance use related deaths				
☐ Emergency room admissions related to s.a.				
☐ People in treatment				
☐ Child abuse reports				
☐ Traffic fatalities				
☐ Cigarette sales				
☐ Number of self-help meetings				

5.) What other groups do you work with to get the information you need? (please check all that apply)

___ Schools ___ State agencies ___ Child welfare agency ___ Police ___ Mayor's Office ___ Treatment providers

___ Hospitals ___ Colleges/universities ___ Other local groups ___ Volunteers ___ Other *(describe)* _____